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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 003692

SIPDIS

DOJ FOR OPDAT-LEHMANN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/21/2015

TAGS: PHUM BG

SUBJECT: HOSPITALIZED BUSINESSMAN RELAYS EXPERIENCE OF
BEATINGS AND TORTURE BY RAB

Classified By: A/DCM D.C. McCullough for reasons para 1.4 b.

11. (U) SUMMARY: An apparently innocent victim of a well-publicized beating by RAB members narrated his experience to poloff from his hospital bed. End Summary.

12. (SBU) On July 19, SK Abubakkar Sultan, the Executive Director of a textile factory, told poloff from his hospital bed that he was heading towards a celebration with some friends on July 15 in the Uttara section of Dhaka when he noticed three men beating up a driver. He stopped to inquire about the problem, and the men replied that the driver had hit their car while they were on their way to a wedding. Sultan said he suggested going to the nearby police station to resolve the situation and one of the men who was beating the driver threw a handful of sand in his eyes and told him to leave them alone.

13. (SBU) Sultan claimed he does not know how one of the assailants got hurt, perhaps inadvertently as Sultan was trying to recover from the sand in his eyes, but one of the assailants emerged with a bruised mouth and said, "You don't know who you have touched, I am from RAB." According to Sultan, this identification was not self-evident as the three men beating the driver were not in uniform and were driving an unmarked vehicle. They were not on duty either as they were on their way to a wedding.

14. (SBU) When Sultan asked the member of RAB, later identified as ASP Ashraf, why he did not say he was from the government up front, he replied, "You will suffer the consequences for touching a RAB person." Some police officers entered the scene and Ashraf ordered them to arrest Sultan. Additionally, Ashraf had called for RAB reinforcements and two jeeps of uniformed RAB members soon arrived.

15. (SBU) When the jeeps of RAB members arrived, they began beating Sultan while he protested saying he's not a criminal and they had not even tried to ascertain whether or not he was a criminal before deciding to beat him. He then said the RAB members encircled and pointed their guns at him while one member urged him to run. Sultan was reluctant to run, fearing he would get shot. According to Sultan, by this time around 500-600 people had gathered around the scene so RAB handcuffed Sultan and took him along with the driver they were originally beating to their nearby RAB 1 Uttara office.

16. (SBU) He said at the office he suffered repeated beatings by numbers of RAB officers taking turns. At one point, they blindfolded him, tied him to a tree and fired a blank shot. When they resumed beating him, Sultan said he asked them to be careful because he has respiratory problems, at which point one RAB officer replied "Good, then we don't even have to kill him in crossfire. We can just say he died of respiratory problems." ASP Ashraf, along with his wife, passed by Sultan, and Ashraf reportedly expressed surprise that Sultan was still alive. Sultan said as a result of the beatings he soon lost consciousness.

17. (SBU) In the meantime, Sultan's friends had reached a Lt.Col Gulgar from the army who was also a RAB officer and who came to the RAB 1 office to intervene on Sultan's behalf. When Gulgar came to the office, some of the RAB officers offered three fake allegations against Sultan. Gulgar questioned Sultan about what happened and then he separately questioned the driver who was also being beaten at the station. When Gulgar found the stories matching, he ordered the RAB members to give Sultan proper treatment. After Gulgar left, the same officers who were beating him were now attending to him. As Sultan was leaving, the RAB members asked him to sign a blank paper. When he showed some reluctance, they tried using some force and he said he relented out of exasperation.

18. (SBU) Sultan has been recovering in a hospital where one of his legs is in a cast, the other has stitches, and there are bruises around the rest of his body. When asked, he didn't claim any political affiliation. Sultan characterized the incident as an "anonymous street encounter that turned into an obvious misuse of power" and his family is in the process of a filing a case against RAB.

19. (SBU) RAB has initiated their own four-member inquiry committee to look into the case. Additionally, both the Prime Minister and the Home Minister have shown strong interest in the case and have ordered investigations.

10. (C) Comment: While we should take a disputant's claims with a grain of salt, his experience and allegations have attracted widespread publicity precisely because they appear so credible. From the beginning, we have warned that condoned extra-judicial killings create a climate of impunity that almost inevitably lead to serious abuse of authority.
CHAMMAS